

Travelling with the Spirit: Pentecostal Migration Religiosity Between Ghana and Australia

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Travelling with the Spirit: Pentecostal Migration Religiosity Between Ghana and Australia

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Abstract:

The desire to migrate to foreign lands is widespread within contemporary Ghana. Among the Ghanaians, there is a growing sense that migrating overseas requires spiritual empowerment. Evidence of this development can be seen in the emergence of “passport and visa industries” that depend on the activities of a multitude of religious agents and ritual experts. Correspondingly, Ghanaian religious agents are now constantly generating new strategies designed to meet prospective migrants’ demands. The practice of enlisting the help of religious agents and practices for the purpose of international migration is having a marked effect on the Ghanaian religious landscape in two key ways: first, it has created a demand for religious agents who possess the power to solve migration-related spiritual problems; second, in response to this demand, Ghana's purveyors of spiritual powers have shaped their practices to inspire and

enable migration. Using data from extensive fieldwork among members of the Church of Pentecost (CoP) and Power Chapel (PC) in Ghana and Australia, this thesis offers an account of the role of religious narratives and rituals in the experience of Ghanaians migrating abroad, and among Ghanaian migrants in Australia. The thesis argues that the present preoccupation with overseas migration, and its interconnection with religion, is creating a migration religiosity (MR) that inspires and enhances migrations, and which forms the basis for migrants' extension of Ghanaian religions from the so-called global-South to the global-North. This MR operates in each phase of the migration experience. In the homeland, prospective migrants use MR to facilitate their international travel. On the journey, MR is the source of spiritual protection and safety. MR continues and takes on new roles as migrants use it in meeting new conditions and experiences in their new land. Migrants' reliance on MR for place-making as they settle into their new lives in the diaspora motivates them to create worshiping Cells. These Cells become the setting in which Ghanaian migrants reformulate their religious traditions, and from which they launch proselytizing practices or reverse missions to the host community.

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